

Guyland book review



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Guyland: The perilous world where boys become men. Michael Loebig

11/28/11 Guyland can be defined as the world in which young men live (Kimmel 2008, pg. 4). It's a stage these young men go through from the time they hit adolescence to the time they enter manhood (from about 15 to 26). It's a world where guys just act as guys, untouched by the adult life of parents, jobs, kids, girlfriends, etc. Kimmel (2008) describes it as a "Peter-Pan mindset", where these kids live in a realm of fun and freedom and never want to grow up.

Guyland is the world young men grow up in, and is a passage they navigate through from adolescence to adulthood. It can also be described as what men do for fun. In this world, they do nothing but drink, have sex, talk sports, and play hours upon hours of video games. And so the purpose of this book, is to travel behind the scenes of Guyland. To explore this treacherous journey where young men try to come out on top, and be the man they're supposed to be. In this book, Kimmel talks very negatively about Guyland. He points out many major problems which I will go into detail about.

But before I do, I want to clarify that he agrees that many men in Guyland are nice guys. But, all these nice guys know about the activities their brothers participate in. The earliest and one of the largest problems we see is bullying. This stage in Guyland usually starts up in middle school, and easily transitions into high school. In Guyland, the victims are boys who do not conform to the Guy Code, "The collection of attitudes, values, and traits that compose what it means to be a man." (Kimmel 2008, pg. 45). The kind of young men who don't fit the standard are usually nerds, or seem feminine.

The men who are seen as feminine by the guys in power are then classified as gay- and become victims of bullying. And nothing is more demeaning to a man than calling them gay or fag. According to Kimmel, calling another man gay is saying in shorthand, ' you're not a man, or you're not manly enough. ' It's no wonder it's the most common put-down in American high schools. Kimmel says, " It refers to anything and everything: what kind of sneakers you have on, what you're eating for lunch, some comment you made in class, who your friends are, or what sports team you like. " (Kimmel 2008, pg. 76).

An example of this is Jesse Montgomery's case, where he was seen as gay (even though he is straight) by his classmates. On a daily basis, he was harassed with words like faggot, bitch, pansy, homo, etc. Some students would throw things at him, steal his books, and even super-glued him to his seat. Some of the torment was directly sexual: " One of the students grabbed his own genitals while squeezing [Jesse's] buttocks and on other occasions would stand behind [him] and grind his penis into [Jesse's] backside. The same student...pretend to rape him anally...sat on [Jesse's] lap and bounced while pretending to have intercourse with him. (Kimmel 2008, pg. 77) The schools do not seem to try and solve the problems these guys have, but stand by and watch, saying to themselves " boys will be boys". Some of them even pass it off as ok, by not punishing the bullies and tell the victim that " you should try acting less gay, and not showing it so openly. " This is unacceptable, especially in Kimmel's eyes. He concludes by saying, " These behaviors are not a sign of boys being boys; they serve as evidence that some kids are predators. Saying " Boys will be boys" is worse than

letting them off the hook. It encourages them. " (Kimmel 2008, pg. 2).

Kimmel feels this all has to stop, for the safety of our children. He feels no child should have to come to school in survival mode, but have confidence and believe they are safe. And I'm sure the fact the he has a son strongly influences his argument, too. I agree with Kimmel's view on this, and believe the school systems should punish the " predators" with intentions of stopping the whole bully scene at their schools, instead of just standing by and being lazy. Bullying has a large impact, not only on the victim but society as a whole. It impacts the bullies, where they feel in power.

But after high school, that power will vanish and they will feel lost without someone to show that temporary power to. It impacts the bully's peers, where they must play by his rules and join in or else they will be the next victim. It impacts the rest of the school, where they all want to help the victim, but know if they do then their social status will be in harm's way (they will be seen as rats in the eyes of the guys in power). It impacts the school administrators, where they have to try and keep control over their students and make sure the kids are safe.

But mostly, it impacts the victim and their family. They are the ones who must suffer and try to cope with problem at hand. The victim feels pain and sadness, and when the family sees their loved one in agony, they feel it too. The only ones who benefit are the bullies themselves. They feel great, as their hunger for proving their manliness has been satisfied. They feel entitled to their power, and bullying is a median through which they can exercise it and remind themselves about it. Another problem is the lack of adults that supervise Guyland.

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Once in high school, most of the parents stop watching over their sons and let them go off and be independent with their social life. The school systems back off as well, because the guys are well-behaved enough where they won't cause too many problems in school. They know what they can and can't do at school at this point. So with the lack of supervision, the guys with power start making all their own rules. They start filling the other guy's heads with ideas about " what a real man is". First thing is the guy code. Kimmel (2008) sums up what guys say what a real man is with the " Real Guy's Top Ten" list : 1.

Boys don't cry. 2. It's better to be mad than sad. 3. Don't get mad, get even. 4. Take it like a man. 5. He who has the most toys when he dies wins. 6. Just do it. 7. Size matters. 8. Don't stop to ask for directions. 9. Nice guys finish last. 10. It's all good. So, the average guy thinks they have to act as if they're always right, must never show emotion that entitles weakness, get revenge on your enemies, and not have a care in the world. Also, be a jackass. This skewed sense of manhood is carried with these guys all the way through college, and then some.

They are told to treat women with disrespect and only use them for sex, and are raised to view alcohol as a ticket to the best life ever at college: parties and frats. They are raised to be animals that only care about having gratuitous amounts of sex while partying it up and to only slide by school. School is rarely mentioned around these groups of guys. All this talk about being hard as nails and getting some as much as possible puts a lot of pressure on the guys to make sure they can keep their image and not screw up in the eyes of other guys.

And as they progress closer and closer to manhood, their ideas of what a real man is are installed more and more securely into their heads. Kimmel sees this as a large reason of why guys are having a harder time growing up: the adult figures are non-present in their lives, which allows these guys to take matters into their own hands and make their own system-set of rules to follow. Which is why it doesn't turn out well. Adolescent males are making the rules about manhood, when they're not even men themselves, despite what they think. And let's not forget the media.

Kimmel talks about the endless hours that guys put into media consumption, and how it's non-worthwhile for the most part. For example, video games. Video games make more profit than all other forms of media by a landslide. They earn \$6.35 billion a year (Kimmel, 2008). And men from ages 16-26 are the largest group of consumers of new media, from video game consoles and online technologies to television and movies, CDs, DVDs, and MP3s (Kimmel 2008). "They do it to relax, to hang out, to have fun. It's entertainment...In fact, in many cases they do it to avoid what's going on in their lives.

All these distractions together comprise a kind of fantasy realm to which guys retreat constantly—sometimes sheepishly, sometimes angrily—because it's a way to escape..." (Kimmel 2008, pg. 147) he writes, which I completely agree with. I myself play a lot of video games and consume a lot of media, and I usually do it to escape my real life. When things are tough, I retreat to this world to relax for a while. However, there are many of us who do it way too often. Some guys will stay connected online playing games for hours upon hours every day and waste their life away.

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Most games give guys a sense of being a hero, of being a character in a world that they would love to inhabit, given the opportunity. They feel more accomplished and more powerful in these worlds that video games paint, and makes them like this world better than their own life and reality, which makes them spend more time playing. They have less to worry about; no responsibilities, much more empowering, and virtually more is at stake. In reality, they have responsibilities of adulthood to face, grades to make, and futures of family responsibility. They're not ready for it yet, and don't want that storm to come just yet.

But in their fantasy realm, they have dragons to kill, and bad guys to shoot. The problems these guys face are obvious: they are unwilling to commit to adulthood as long as they keep this attitude up. They need to move on from their virtual life online and stop wasting pointless hours—and they know they're pointless—playing their video games. This problem only takes effect on the guys, so it's their responsibilities to pull themselves out of their escape world and back into reality. Kimmel's thesis has been developed through years of research, and data accumulated from interviewing tens of thousands of guys from thousands of campuses around the globe. Therefore he has gathered information and data from many groups of people and given He has made tons of surveys and has really done his work. In the end, he concludes, " Guyland is both a social space and a stage of life. It's unlikely to disappear—if anything the stage of life is likely to become more firmly entrenched. There are positive reasons for delaying marriage, exploring different career paths, playing the field, traveling, hanging out, exploring oneself and who one wants to be, and become, in this lifetime.

But It must be well spent. ” (Kimmel 2008, pg. 288). He is saying that Guyland has it’s pros, but they must not be overlooked. They need to be kept under control, and the way to do that is to separate Guyland from itself —to separate the social stage part from the social space part. By taking the staged half from the reality half, we can enable young guys to live through this stage with more caution, honor, and resilience. This is the goal Kimmel foresees. Throughout the book, I noticed many crossovers between Kimmel’s text and concepts that we discussed in class. The first thing I think of is the bullying issue.

We touched on Jamie Nabozny and Kimmel talked about his story as well. And the relationships remain the same. In both contexts, issues about the bullies, victims, and how the professionals handled it were brought up. In class, we talked about how the victim is usually unwilling to conform to society’s standards, which is the underlying reason they are bullied. Jamie’s case was that he was gay. In many people’s eyes, being gay is against the norm and is frowned upon, which is the problem. Both in class and in Guyland do we agree this is the reason he was bullied. In Guyland, the bullies are the popular guys, the ones that run the show.

In their eyes, Jamie was not a real man. He was not interested in women, and this was against the guy code. So, they thought he deserved to be punished for not playing by the rules. Both in class and in Guyland, we agree that the actions taken by the school administrators were insufficient. They did not help Jamie’s problem and in some ways encouraged it. The bullies were never punished, and the school officials just let it go , saying “ boys will be boys”. Carrying this attitude with them, the bullies saw it as a sign that they

can carry this thing further. The problems escalated, and now Jamie's other came in and the woman in charge of punishment told her "boys will be boys". She also told Jamie that he "had it coming to him", and she not act so openly gay. This is obviously unacceptable, to let this bullying go unpunished and unsolved. Common ground was met on this topic both in-class and in Guyland. Another example is the way women are scene in society. We talked about this in class where woman are undermined. In class, we saw this in the movie Metropolis, where the women were living had unsubstantial jobs and in the eyes of the company, were just tools to do their work and get the job done.

Women are seen in the same way in Guyland, where they are seen as nothing but objects of sex. The guys don't care about their well-being and how they feel, and don't want a relationship. They only have their eyes on the prize, and that's sex. In Metropolis, the company's prize is money.

Another connection is the reoccurrence of privilege throughout the book. In class, we talked about privelage as an economic standpoint. Children born and raised inside a wealthy family was going to be more privileged in life. They would have more money, therefore more opportunities to try things.

We also discussed the one example from Guyland, about the talk show called "A Black Women Stole My Job". Kimmel asked why the show was not titled something like "A Black Women Got A Job" or "A Black Women Got The Job". He said, "These men felt the job was "theirs" because they felt entitled to it, and when some "other" person—black, female—got the job, that person was really taken what was "rightfully" theirs." (Kimmel 2008, pg. 60). Throughout the book, Kimmel's methods of investigation were very

well done. He went to thousands of campuses around the world, and interviewed thousands of young men from different backgrounds.

He did his work, and it shows. He had many points of interest in the book. However, I did not see the point of studying most of his material. Most of what he says and argues, are just elements of my daily life (not bullying and raping, that's extreme stuff!). It was all stuff I already knew, which is pretty much what I expected. When it came to readability, I found it effortlessly easy. I was very happy to find how well it was constructed to fit in with guy-talk. The information given was, like I said, known knowledge to me, and compared to other books, held a lower interest value. But when it comes to course material, I feel it tied in ok. I would definitely not recommend this to a friend. Unless it was like, my younger cousin, who could find use for this information and help him understand what is coming into his life in the near future, I would not recommend it to somebody of my age. I feel boys already in Guyland, do not need something to reiterate and dive into the life they already live. This book was of somewhat value to me, because some questions I had about how my life changed from a little boy to adolescence had been explained, but besides that I really found no use in anything else I read about it.

I did get a few laughs, whether it was about some outrageous conclusion he came to or just some of the raunchy subjects he touched on. All in all, I cannot say I felt this book to be worthwhile. That's just in my own eyes, but this is my opinion. I can say that I learned some things about why some things happened back in my earlier years, and the fact that guys are always

trying to prove themselves in the eyes of other men was made more clearly to me. It's so true!

In conclusion, Kimmel wants to see a world where guys can grow up among their peers, but use more caution, honor, and resilience. He wants what's best for America's guys, and the best for the society in which they live. He wants them to be understood through the words of this book, so we as a society can change the ways we interact with our young men and keep things more healthy. Kimmel, Michael. 2001. Guyland. The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men. New York: Harper